

<b>Schools Forum 9 November 2023</b>	
<b>Report from the Executive Director of People (Children)</b>	
<b>Growth Fund 2023-24 update</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	1
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**This report is for information and relates to all Schools Forum representatives**

**1 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To provide schools forum with an update on the Growth Fund for 2023-24.

**2 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

2.1 Note the updated allocations of Growth Funding for 2023-24 as shown in Appendix A.

**3 Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 In approving the top slice for the Growth Fund for 2023-24 Schools Forum were aware that a healthy contingency sum was included to meet create new places to meet in-year pressures.

**4 Supporting Information**

**Primary Places**

4.1 Birth numbers have reduced year on year since the peak in 2010-11 and 2011-12. This has created a surplus of places in primary schools overall although this is not spread evenly across Slough’s planning areas.

- This **west** planning area has seen the largest fall in birth numbers. A number of schools have already reduced their admission numbers, it is likely that a further reduction or two will be required over the next few years.

The current surplus places are above our 'target surplus' in all year groups. No additional capacity is required. May 2023, the surplus capacity in Reception was 16%.

- The **central** planning area is under pressure in many primary year groups. For May 2023 5 of the 7 current year groups have less than our target surplus. This indicates that further capacity is required in this planning area.

May 2023, the surplus capacity in Reception was 4%. Based on birth data the demand for Reception places will remain at current levels for the next 5 years (dipping for 2025-26).

- The **east** planning area is very popular and attracts pupils from other planning areas. 5 of the 7 current year groups have less than our target surplus. This indicates that further capacity is required in this planning area.

May 2023, the surplus capacity in Reception was only 1%. Demand for Reception is forecast to reduce over the next 5 years based on birth data but numbers on roll may not reduce due to popularity.

- 4.2 There is a sustained pressure on places in the Central and East Planning Areas as in-year applications have risen to their highest ever levels. This has required that the LA open 2 bulge classes at the start of the school year, it is possible that further capacity will be required in 2023-24 and future years.
- 4.3 An issue has emerged recently whereby schools have managed partially filled classes down to a level where one less teacher is required in a specific year group. When this happens in areas with a pressure on places it can have an impact on the Growth Fund. To replace a 'lost' class with a bulge class would cost the Growth Fund up to £109K at 2023-24 rates.

## Secondary Schools

- 4.4 The population growth has been impacting secondary schools for some years and 3 new secondary schools and an all-through school have opened. In addition, 2 non-selective schools plus one grammar school have undergone expansion funded by the LA. Slough's other three grammar schools have all increased their PANs.
- 4.5 The peak in Slough's birth numbers reached Year 7 in 2022 and 2023. The increases mentioned above provide sufficient capacity for this peak and the need for additional places is not expected. This will be monitored as the rate of in-year applications may change this position.

## **2023-24 Funding Requirements**

- 4.6 Projected requirements for 2023-24 are shown in Appendix A. The top slice agreed in January 2023 was £565K. This is the last year of commitments for permanent expansion projects at Wexham and Westgate Schools. 2 bulge classes have opened at Godolphin Junior and Marish Primary to ensure all pupils continue to be offered suitable school places.
- 4.7 There remains just under £180K contingency once commitments are excluded. It is hoped this is sufficient to cover all new places that may be required by March 2024.

## **5 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The financial implications have been detailed in the body of this paper.

## **6 Alternative Options Considered**

- 6.1 Paying academies for the whole year in advance rather than in 2 tranches – this was discounted as it crossed 2 financial years.
- 6.2 Showing academic years on a single sheet rather than based on financial years – discounted as it was less clear how the Growth Fund would fund April to August payments to academies.

## **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Local Authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential.

## **8 Equality Implications**

- 8.1 Not applicable